

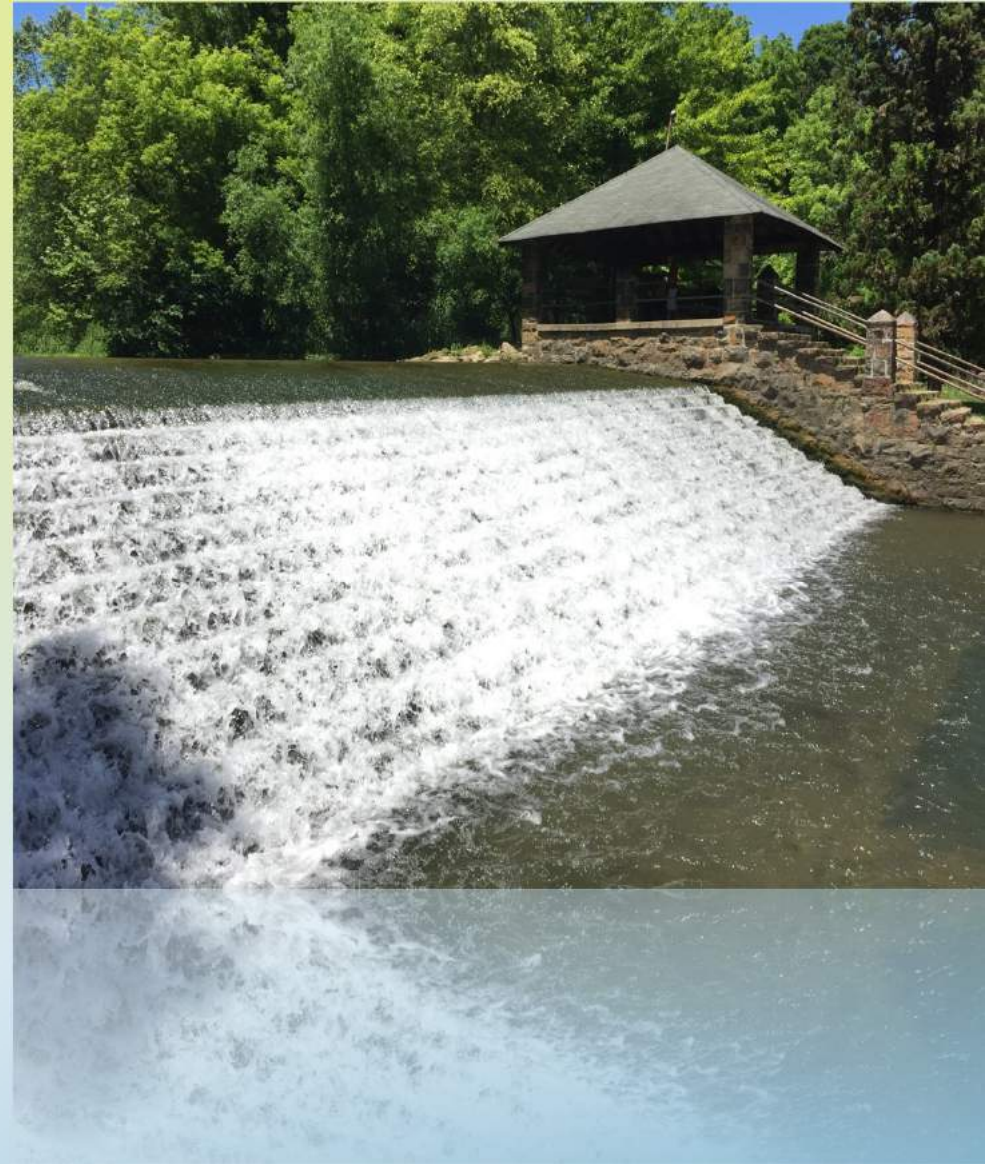
CITY OF BETHLEHEM

Comprehensive Parks and Pools Study



THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

- To examine Bethlehem's Recreation Department with an eye towards ensuring that Bethlehem's park system contributes towards making the City a great place to live.
- To create a plan to rehabilitate and update Bethlehem's park system to reflect and meet the needs of residents as the population of the City changes and grows.



THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

- To ensure that Bethlehem's Recreation Department provides recreational opportunities for residents of all ages, abilities, ethnicities and income levels
- To identify and plan for the protection of sensitive natural and cultural resources in the City's parks.
- To identify ways to enhance the physical, environmental and financial sustainability of the Recreation Department.



STUDY METHODOLOGY

Guided by the City and the National Recreation and Park Association, measurable categories were defined in order to assess the facilities and performance of Bethlehem's Recreation Department as compared to other communities with a similar budget, population and seasonal influences.

THE FIVE CATEGORIES ARE:

1. AVAILABLE RECREATION LAND
2. ENVIRONMENT AND STORMWATER MANAGEMENT
3. RECREATIONAL FACILITIES, BUILDINGS AND POOLS
4. RECREATION PROGRAMMING
5. MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS



Questions the Study will Answer

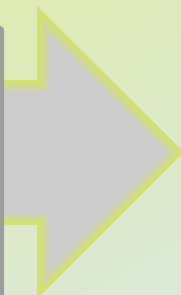
I. AVAILABLE RECREATION LAND



- Are land and facility offerings adequate to meet needs of residents?
- Are recreation opportunities in the City accessible to all residents?
- Are the parks well attended?
- Can the City maintain and financially sustain the parks and pools it owns?

Questions the Study will Answer:

II. ENVIRONMENT & STORMWATER MANAGEMENT



- Is the City managing park lands in an environmentally responsible way?
- Are riparian corridors, woodlands and wildlife habitats being protected?
- What sustainability improvements could be made to protect the environment, reduce stormwater and reduce maintenance?

Questions the Study will Answer:

III. RECREATION FACILITIES, BUILDINGS & POOLS



- Are current park facilities, buildings and pools safe and accessible to all users including the handicapped?
- Do neighborhood parks provide recreational opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities?
- Are the parks in each of the City's neighborhoods equally well equipped and maintained?
- What types of improvements can be made to increase the sustainability of the City's parks as a system?

Questions the Study will Answer:

IV. RECREATION PROGRAMMING



- Does the City provide programs to meet the needs of residents of all ages and abilities?
- Can the City market recreation programs more effectively?

V. MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS



- Does the City effectively use the available staff to keep the parks well maintained?
- What funding options are available to provide a sustainable source of revenue for park maintenance and improvements into the future?

FORMAT OF THE STUDY

- **Identify Service Areas as defined by the NRPA for Bethlehem's**
 - Neighborhood Parks
 - Community Parks
 - Pools
- **Analyze City Neighborhood Demographics**
 - Population
 - Owner Occupied Housing
 - Age
 - Income
- **Examine Existing Conditions**
 - Park Land, Facilities, Buildings and Pools
 - Recreation Department & Operations
- **Analyze Findings relative to National Averages**
- **Make Recommendations in the Five Study Categories, based on Analysis**



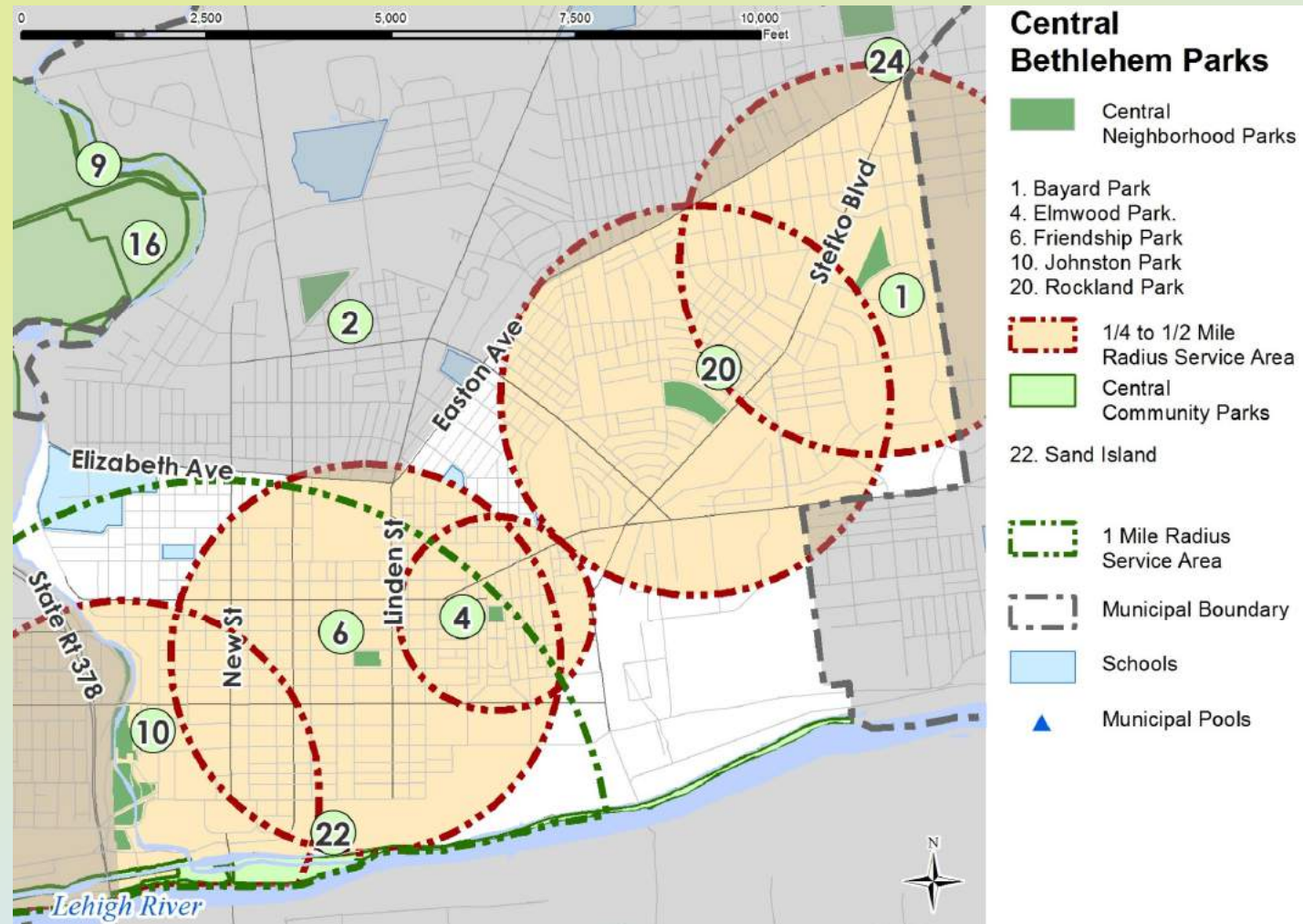
Existing Parks & Service Areas: Central Bethlehem

STRENGTHS:

- Service Areas cover the neighborhood
- Parks are well spaced
- Active and Passive Recreation
- Bethlehem Trail connections at Sand Island
- Sand Island offers unique recreational venues

DEFICIENCIES:

- Passive Recreation service area is more than 2 miles from Northern most Central Bethlehem Park
- No municipal pool or water play
- Limited ADA provisions
- Multiple Physical Barriers prevent accessibility to parks (walls, slopes, fences, arterial streets)
- High to Moderate Housing Density and Moderate Incomes



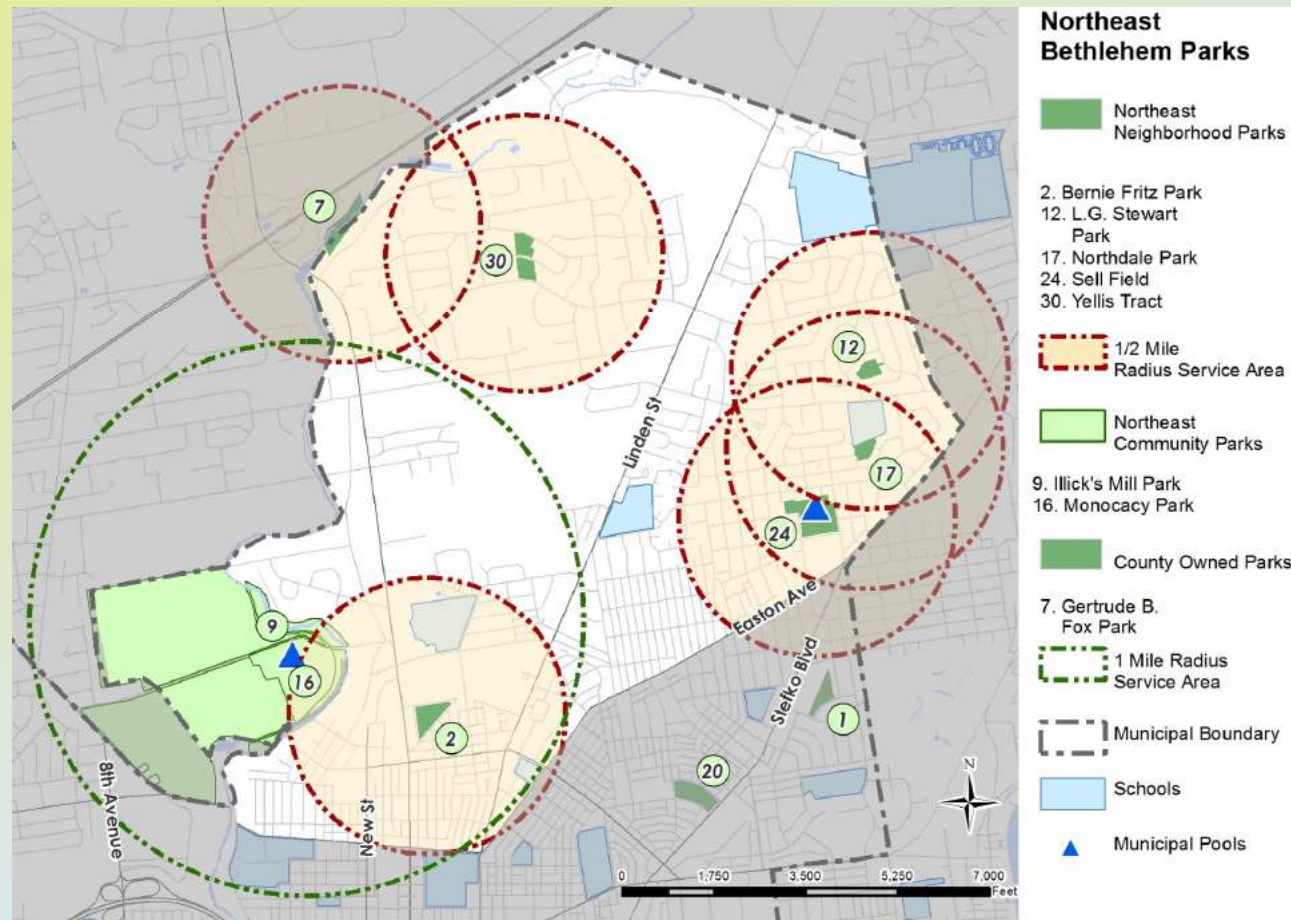
Existing Parks & Service Areas: Northeast Bethlehem

STRENGTHS:

- The Monocacy Park – Illick's Mill complex provides many unique recreation opportunities
- Active and Passive Recreation Opportunities
- Bethlehem Trail connections at Monocacy Park
- Two municipal pools serve this neighborhood
- Schools and Adjacent Recreation Areas provide opportunities and help to fill service area gap.
- Low Density Housing and Higher average incomes mean residents here own more personal land and use public transportation less

DEFICIENCIES:

- Neighborhood Park Service Area Gap
- Three of the Five Neighborhood Parks are predominated by Athletic Facilities
- ADA provisions are limited
- Multiple Physical Barriers prohibit access to parks (no sidewalks, arterial streets)
- Environmental and Sustainability Improvements are needed



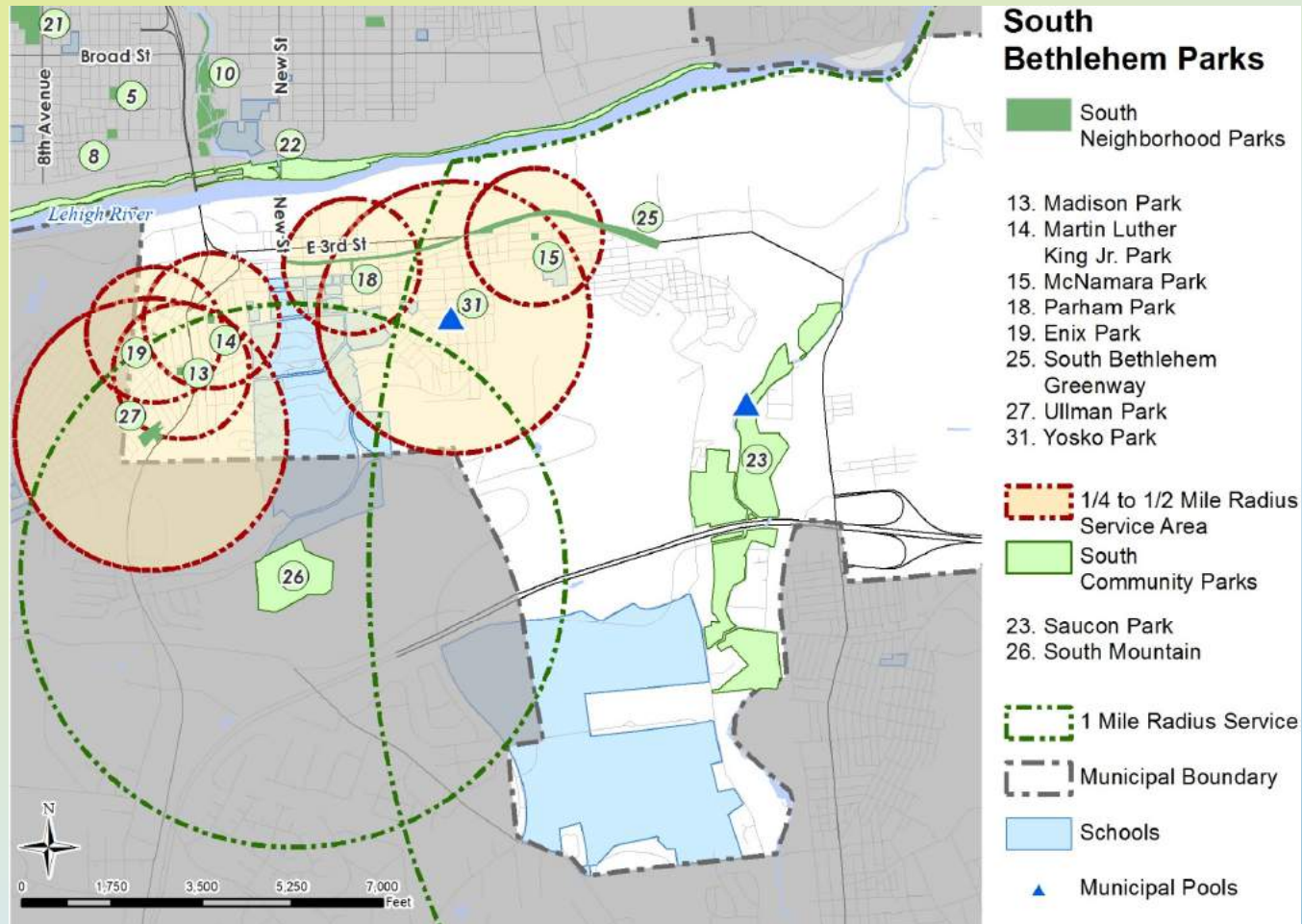
Existing Parks & Service Areas: South Bethlehem

STRENGTHS:

- Service Areas provide good coverage to this Neighborhood
- Parks are well spaced throughout this dense residential area
- Active and Passive Recreation is available
- Bethlehem Trail connections on the South Bethlehem Greenway
- Yosko Park offers unique recreation facilities

DEFICIENCIES:

- Multiple Physical barriers limit access to Parks. (walls, steep slopes, Wyndotte St.)
- ADA access is limited
- Passive Recreation is accessible only by vehicle for a majority of this neighborhoods residents
- Environmental and Sustainability Improvements are needed along riparian corridors and in woodlands



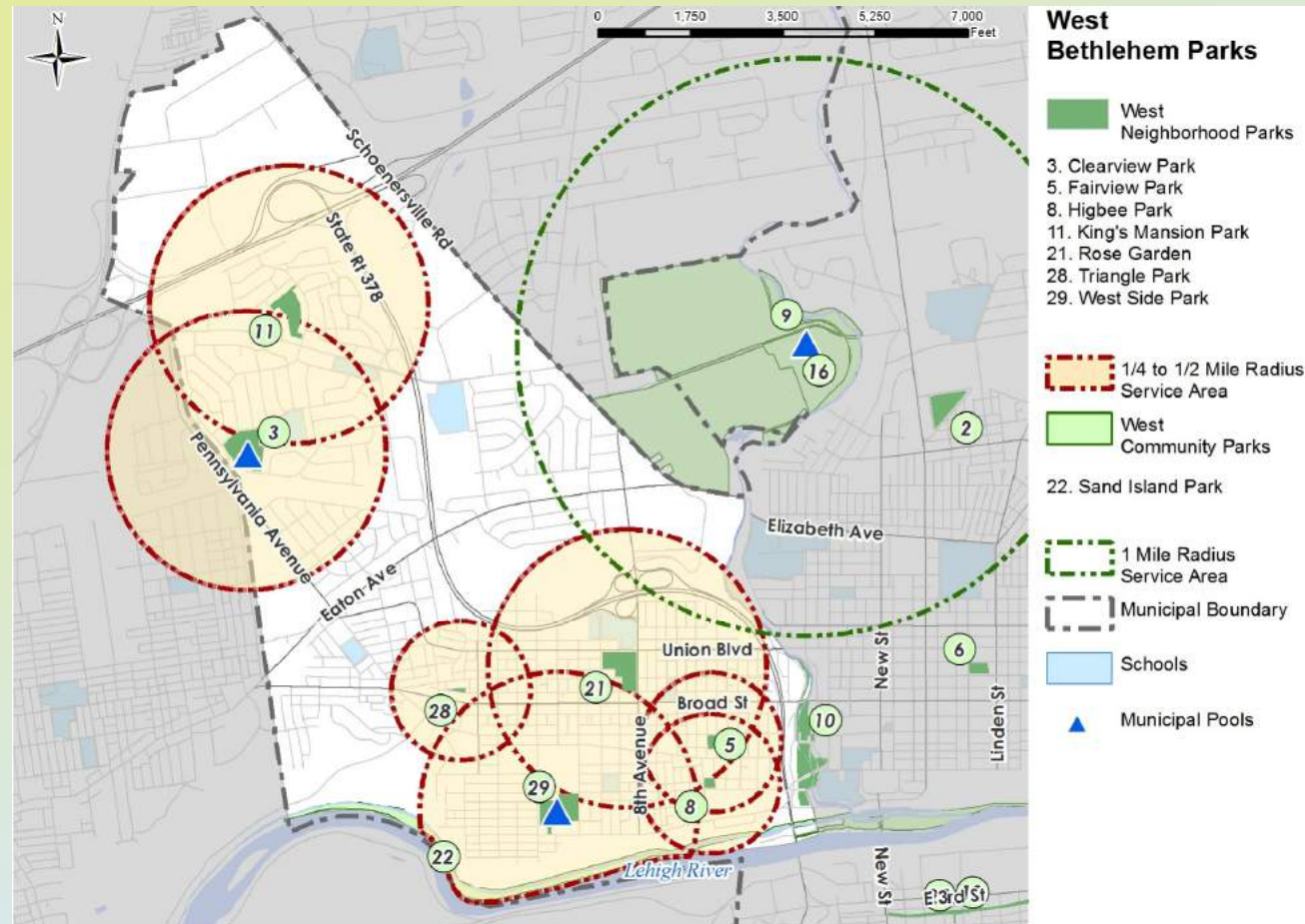
Existing Parks & Service Areas: West Bethlehem

STRENGTHS:

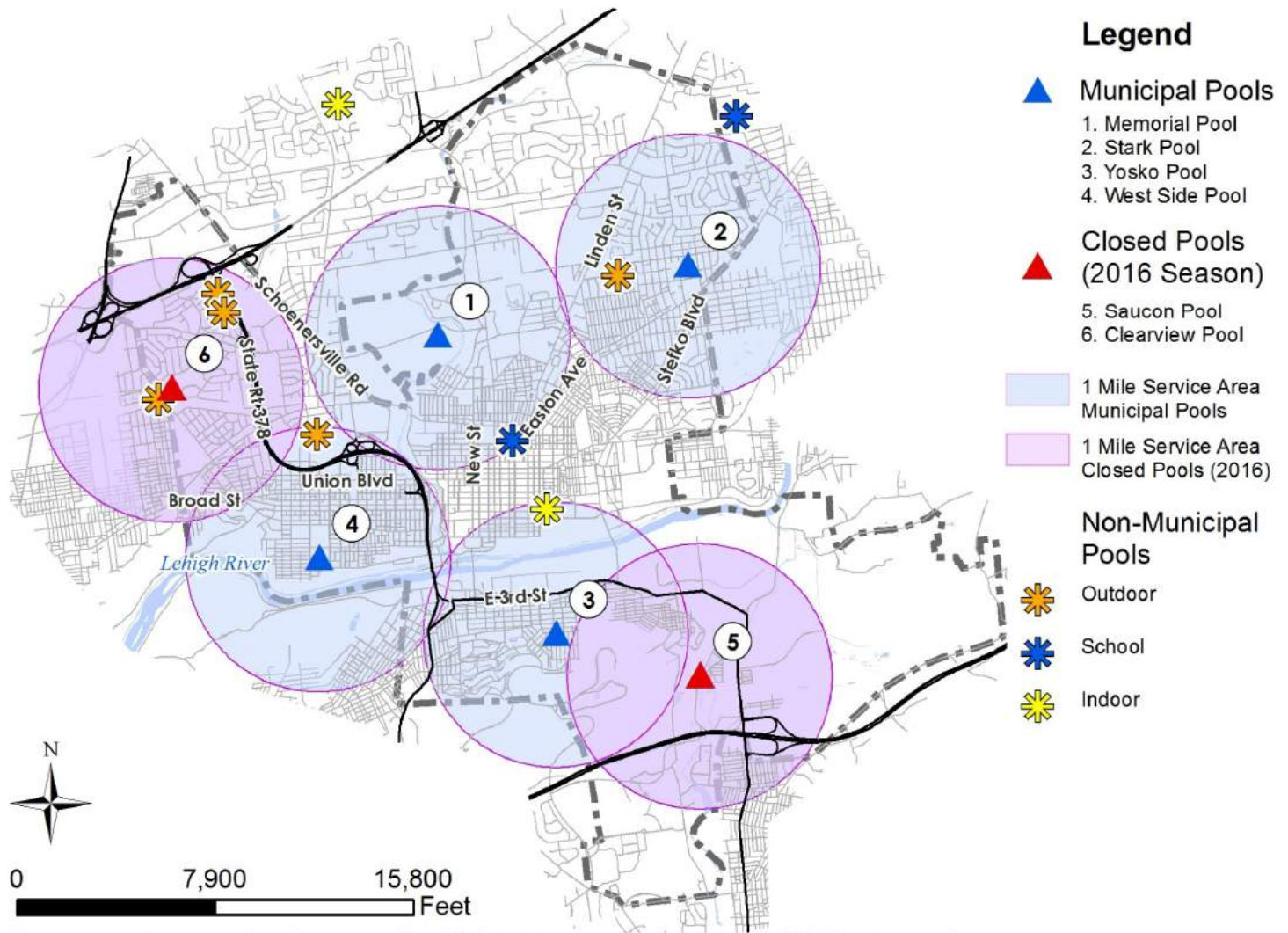
- Service areas provide good coverage in most dense residential area in this neighborhood
- Large Neighborhood Parks offer a blend of Active and Passive Recreation
- Two municipal pools serve this residential population
- Rose Garden Park offers unique recreation opportunities and the Band Shell serves a Regional Audience
- Schools and the Monocacy Park service area help to close the service area gap

DEFICIENCIES:

- Physical barriers limit access to parks and trails (walls, arterial streets, slopes)
- Limited ADA accessibility
- Passive Recreation and Opportunity to interact with Nature is a car trip for most residents in this neighborhood
- Environmental and Sustainability Improvements are needed (Johnston Park, Kings Mansion, West Side)



BETHLEHEM POOLS & SERVICE AREAS



- Use of municipal pools has declined
- Many City pools close early due to poor attendance
- Increased competition from personal and private pools
- Pools, pool buildings and pool equipment are well past expected useful life
- Pools are expensive to maintain
- City pools operate at a loss
- The City can not financially sustain 5 pools
- Other Municipalities with pools are building destination pools and/or splash pads

Existing Conditions: Park Amenities – Playgrounds

- Equipment spacing increases maintenance, limits movement between pieces and offers less open lawn.
- Lack of adequate fall zone protection
- No true ADA access
- Similar experiences for play at most parks
- Facilities installed serves ages 2-12. No provisions for older youth.
- Metal swing frames & climbers show peeling paint and rust
- Inconsistent quality in play pieces.



Existing Conditions: Park Amenities – Support Facilities

- Lack of ADA access within parks
- Inconsistent conditions within parks
- Lack of Seating
- Lack of safe and accessible connections to parks
- Missed opportunities to highlight facilities with historical or educational value
- Limited Directional and Informational Signs
- Lack of Shade Trees and Play Lawn Areas



Existing Conditions: Park Amenities – Connections

12.7 Percent of the Population of the City of Bethlehem suffers from a physical, emotional or intellectual handicap.

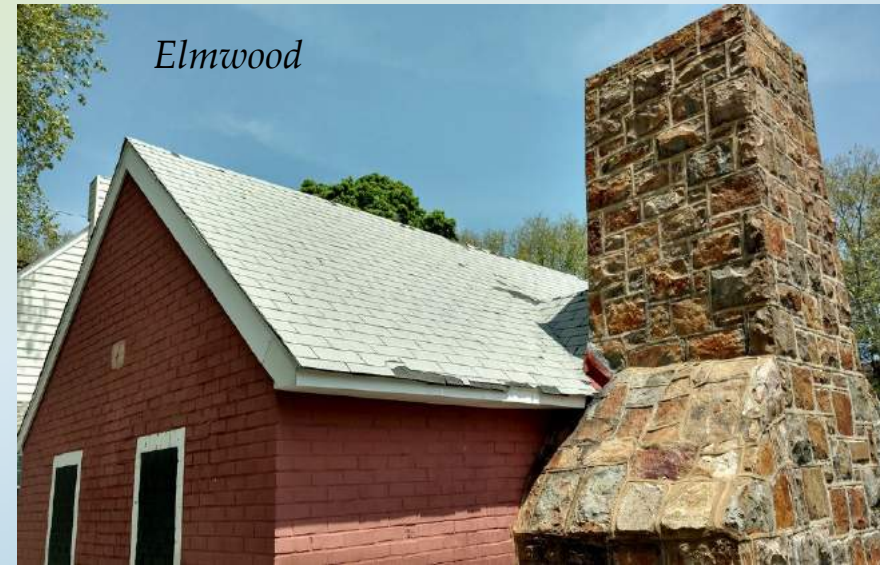
- Lack of ADA access to parks
- Steps, walls, steep ramps, driveway aprons and narrow pathways present physical barriers
- Pavement surfaces not smooth, stable and slip resistant
- Gravel paths are encroached by vegetation
- Crosswalks to parks are missing
- Ramps that meet ADA criteria are inconsistent
- Crossing Signs are needed



Existing Conditions: Park Buildings - Central and Northeast Parks

COMMON DEFICIENCIES:

- Lack of ADA provisions within and to access buildings
- Rotting wood trim
- Outdated non-compliant electrical panels
- Roof shingles missing
- No water protection at roof edges
- Masonry and structural building cracks



Existing Conditions: Park Buildings – South and West Parks

COMMON DEFICIENCIES:

- Lack of ADA provisions
- Rotting wood trim
- Outdated non-compliant electrical panels
- Roof shingles missing
- No water protection at roof edges
- Masonry and structural cracks



Existing Conditions: Pool Buildings

COMMON DEFICIENCIES:

- Lack of ADA toilet rooms
- Rusting metal pipe, doors, stairs, tanks...
- Outdated and non-compliant electrical panels
- Lack of filter room venting
- No water protection at roof edges
- Masonry & Structural Issues



Existing Conditions: Pools

COMMON DEFICIENCIES:

- Lack of ADA access
- Lack of modern play features like slides and tubes
- Pool decking and coping in need of rehabilitation
- Pool gutters and drains need rehabilitation
- Tile and Plaster needs repair



Existing Conditions: Pool Filter Rooms

COMMON DEFICIENCIES:

- Unvented chlorine tanks
- Filter room equipment not to code
- Corrosion
- Open tank DE systems



Existing Environmental Sustainability: All Parks

COMMON CONCERNS:

- Urban parks often have more paving than is required for the activity
- Lawn grass can be replaced with a low maintenance variety
- Current Spacing of Play Equipment means more edging and less useable open lawn areas.
- Wooded areas with no understory should have conservation and maintenance plans
- Waterways should be protected with riparian buffers
- Parks should be designed to remediate storm water and to provide recreation



FINDINGS: BETHLEHEM'S PARKS AND POOLS

ASSETS

- ✓ Bethlehem is committed to improving conditions at parks and pools, to increasing recreational opportunities throughout the City and to improving fiscal responsibility across all departments.
- ✓ The number of parks (35) offered throughout the City exceed national averages of (33) parks for a population between 50,000 and 100,000.
- ✓ The municipal Golf Course, Performance Venues (Ice House and Band Shell), Rose Garden, the Outdoor Ice Rink, Tennis Club, Lighted Basketball Courts, Illick's Mill and WPA stone work are facilities that are unique to Bethlehem. These facilities require extra and specialized maintenance personnel to maximize their longevity.
- ✓ The parks offer a good blending of active and passive recreational opportunities.
- ✓ Bethlehem maintains more miles of trail (12) than the National Average (11), including the D&L Trail, which is part of a National Heritage Corridor.
- ✓ Bethlehem partners with many area agencies to provide programming that reaches residents of a variety of ages and abilities.



FINDINGS: BETHLEHEM'S PARKS AND POOLS

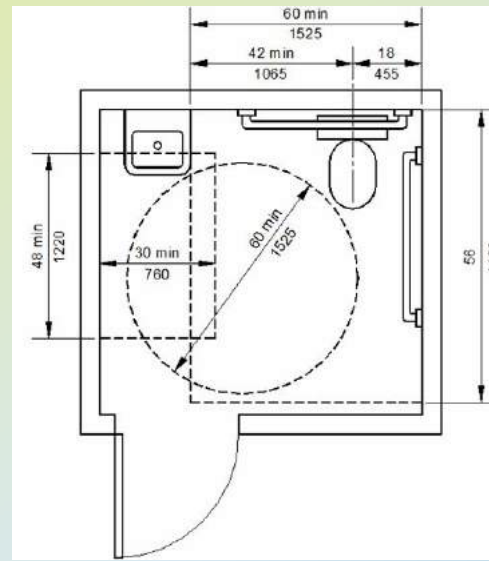
CONSTRAINTS

- Lack of planning for park improvements and inconsistent maintenance has resulted in broken and outdated play equipment that does not meet current safety standards for playground safety or ADA accessibility. Many physical barriers limit access to parks.
- Inconsistent building maintenance at the Parks has resulted in buildings and historic stone works throughout the City that are structurally damaged, with rotting timber framing, crumbling masonry and dangerously outdated utilities.
- Park facilities lack imagination, variety and accessibility. Active recreation opportunities for young adults and facilities that accommodate the needs of the elderly and the handicapped are lacking in most City neighborhoods.
- Lack of advance planning has resulted in parks that are more costly to maintain and not sustainable. There is no life cycle cost analysis or annual replacement costs built into the existing Capital Budget.
- Number of pools maintained by the City is not sustainable. Pools and pool buildings need to be financially sustainable to remain open.



Recommended Actions

Category I:
Make the Most of the City's Recreation Land by Planning



□ Write a Master Plan for Monocacy Park/Illicks Mill & Memorial Pool

- Monocacy Park is centrally located for residents
- Memorial Pool is currently the most financially sustainable
- Most available land for expansion
- Expansive existing parking
- Existing facilities provide active and passive recreation opportunities for all seasons
- Monocacy Way can connect Memorial Pool and Illick's Mill with downtown Bethlehem and to West Bethlehem
- As a destination pool Memorial will be financially sustainable
- Memorial Pool is currently in need of extensive repair



WADE
ASSOCIATES

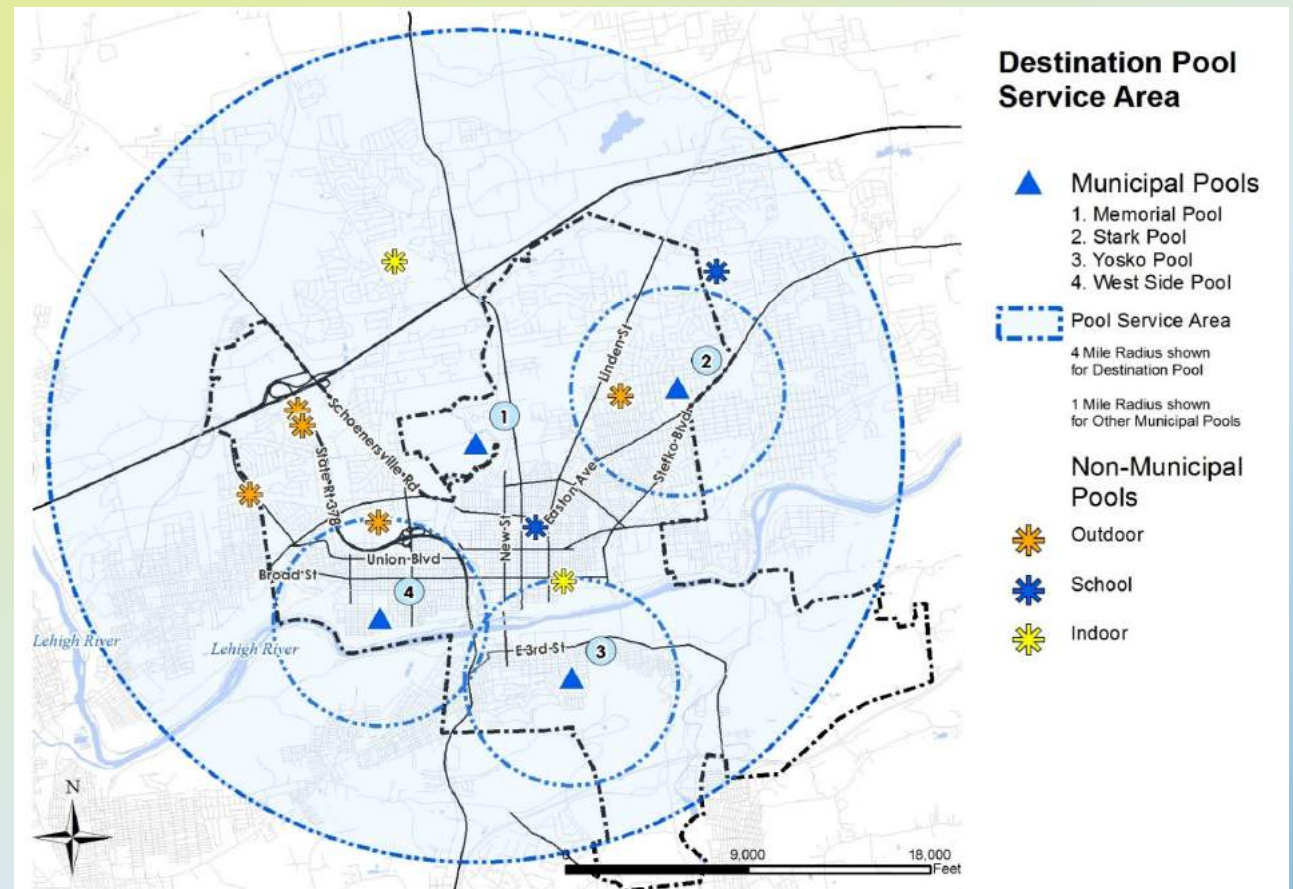


SPILLMAN FARMER
architects

MONOCACY PARK
BETHLEHEM, PA

❑ Plan to close pools that are unsafe, need costly repairs, are poorly attended and are not financially sustainable after Memorial Pool renovations have been completed.

- As a destination pool, Memorial Pool could serve the entire City of Bethlehem.
- A typical destination pool service area of 4 miles is shown on the map to the right.



❑ Plan to build a successful neighborhood parks system by writing a city-wide neighborhood parks master plan

- Planning should take place concurrently with the planning for Monocacy Park complex improvements.
- Each “Neighborhood Park System” will feature variety, opportunity and accessibility for multiple experiences:
 - Inclusive Play, Natural Play and Water Play Opportunities
 - Recreation Facilities for Individual and Young Adult Recreation
 - Passive Recreation and Environmental Enhancement
- Evaluate underutilized park lands. Is there potential for this land to better serve the community or should the land be sold?



Neighborhood Park System Example

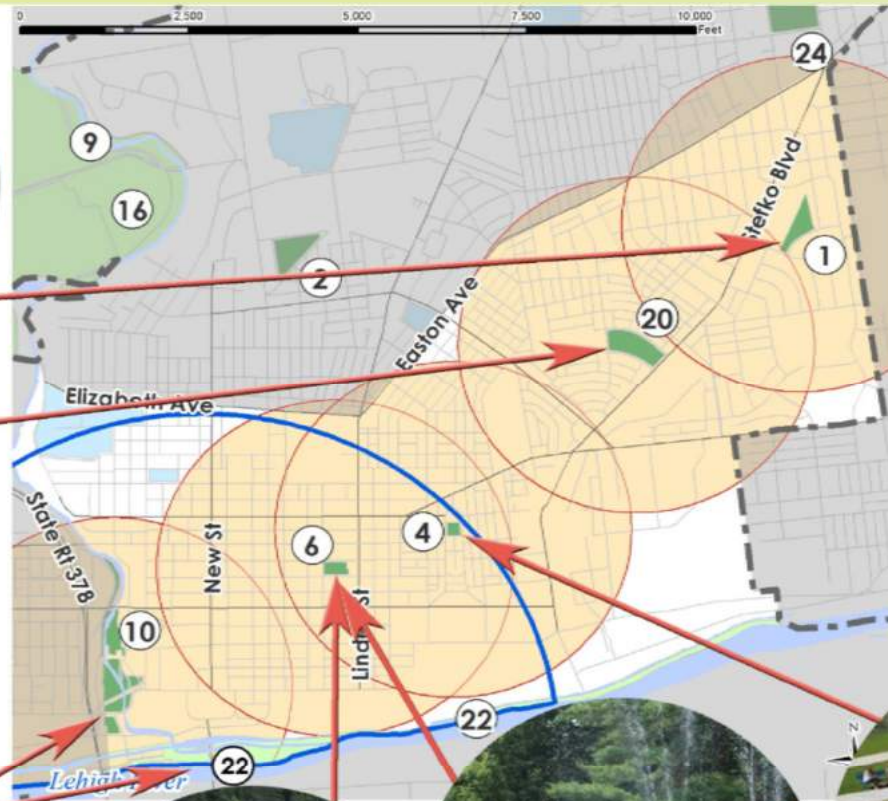
Nature Play Bayard



Passive Recreation-Rockland



Formalized Access to Water Johnston/Sand Island



Central Bethlehem Parks

Central Neighborhood Parks

1. Bayard Park
4. Elmwood Park
6. Friendship Park
10. Johnston Park
20. Rockland Park

1/2 Mile Service Area

Central Community Parks

22. Sand Island

1 Mile Service Area

Municipal Boundary

Schools

Municipal Pools

Active Young Adult Recreation & Splash Pad - Friendship

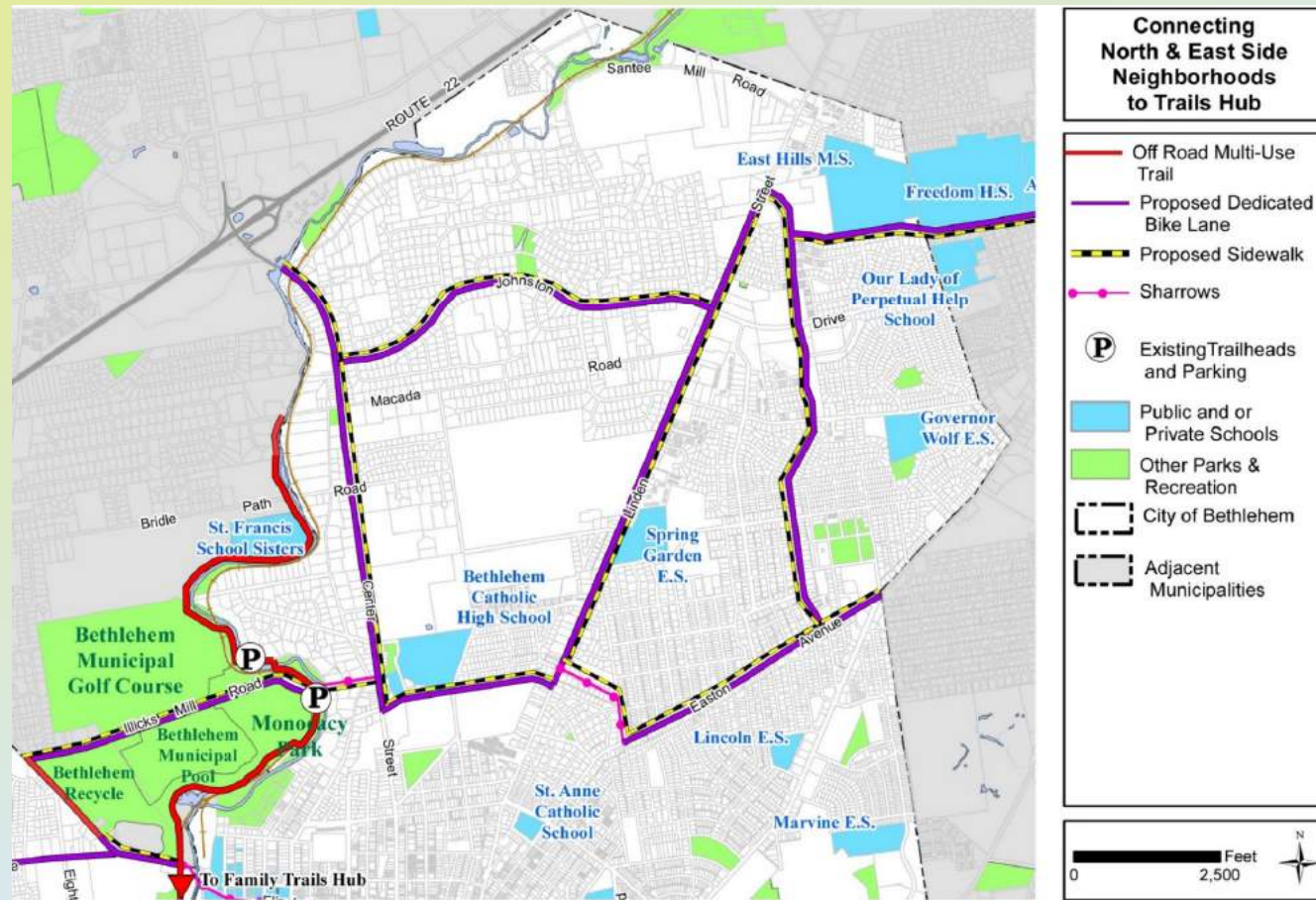


Inclusive Playground Elmwood



❑ Implement the recommendations of Beth Connects: A Trails Study.

- Improve Recreation Opportunities for residents by improving access to recreation within the City and outside of the City.
- Incorporate Recommendations of the Trails Study into improvements planned for City parks.
- Improve bicycle and pedestrian routes throughout the City, both on and off road, linking City neighborhoods to parks, schools, trails and entertainment venues.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

Category II. Environment & Stormwater Management

- ❑ Provide and Enhance existing Natural Buffers for Water Bodies while Providing Formalized Access to the water for Fishing, Boating and Wildlife Observation.
- ❑ Reduce pavement, increase naturalized no-mow areas, use pervious pavements, manage storm water naturally by designing rain gardens and vegetated swales to cleanse, cool and slow storm water runoff.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

Category III. Recreational Facilities & Buildings

❑ Provide Safe and Accessible Buildings, Playgrounds, Amenities and Pools

- Renovate Facilities that do not meet current building codes, recreation safety criteria, and/or do not meet ADA accessibility criteria.
- Remove Facilities that are no longer used, are Expensive to Rehabilitate and/or that are Duplicated within the same Neighborhood Park Service Area.
- Planning for new facilities should factor in Life Cycle Costs to increase Fiscal Sustainability and to Prevent Deterioration of Amenities.
- Maximize the Educational and Cultural Value of Historic Structures and Memorials to ensure Longevity for the enjoyment of Future Generations.



RECOMMENDATIONS: Category IV. Programming

- ❑ Continue to Partner with Lehigh Valley and City Agencies to provide Programs for Residents of all Ages and Abilities
- ❑ Find ways to market Programs by Positioning the Recreation Department as a Program Resource
- ❑ Work to meet the National Cost Recovery Average of 25% of Operational Costs through Programming
- ❑ Train Staff to provide Quality Experiences for Program Participants.



RECOMMENDATIONS: Category V. Maintenance & Operations

- ☐ Continue to investigate ways to reduce maintenance costs, to enhance the sustainability of facilities and to improve the quality of the environment and wildlife habitats within the parks
- ☐ Maintain a staff of qualified personnel. Provide necessary training and certifications.
- ☐ Factor life cycle and scheduled maintenance costs into annual operations budget.
- ☐ Improve communications between department heads, facility managers and City administration.
- ☐ Upgrade technology to make data collection at points of sale more efficient, useful and transparent.
- ☐ Take advantage of available funding to pay for rehabilitation and development costs.
- ☐ Work with outside agencies to improve financial sustainability by sharing management costs and revenues.
- ☐ Charge lease rates that reflect cost of maintenance, land value and a 25% cost recovery margin.
- ☐ Create fund raising groups to provide long term park revenue for maintenance and development



The City is Committed to Improving Quality of Life through Parks and Recreation

☐ Facility Improvements made in 2016/2017

- Renovation of Stark Pool Bath House to Meet ADA Criteria
- Expansion of Stark Pool Filter Room to accommodate a new storage tank

☐ Facility Improvements Budgeted for 2017

- Replace and Update Playground Equipment at Sand Island, MacNamara, Elmwood & Bayard Parks.
- Elmwood Park will add inclusive safety surface.
- The City has committed to renovations and continued maintenance and upkeep of the DAR House in Rose Garden Park and the Charles Brown Ice House. DAR will see rotted beams replaced this spring.
- Rusty beam at Memorial Pool is being replaced



Before



AFTER



AFTER



DURING

STARK POOL Renovations



AFTER

BAYARD & MLK NEW PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT



ELMWOOD NEW PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT



SAND ISLAND NEW PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT



NEXT STEPS

☐ THREE PUBLIC MEETINGS

- To be held in three City neighborhoods
- To educate the public about this study and its findings
- To inform the public about City initiatives in recreation and parks
- To energize residents to begin to think about outdoor recreation



☐ Planning Projects to Begin in 2017

- Monocacy Destination Park and Pool Master Plan
- City wide Neighborhood Park System Master Site Development Plan





THANK YOU

COMMENTS &
QUESTIONS?